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“Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise; but the companion of fools shall smart for it.” That’s from Proverbs 13:20. Its obvious application is relationships—Pick who you listen to and befriend carefully, because it *will* influence you. I apply this verse to my relationship with the Media, an acquaintance that I want very limited doses of.

What is the Media? The term generally refers to the news and information sources that permeate American culture. Advertisements, information, amusement, and entertainment—you name it, and chances are that the Media can provide it. Its influence reaches us through the radio and television, through books, advertisements, and movies, through the internet with its blogs and websites.

This easily-accessible, charming Media has something for just about everybody, with an abundance of news about scientific and historical discoveries, politics, pop culture, entertainment, and education. There are daily comics and crossword puzzles, to make us laugh and make our brains exercise a bit. We learn about outrages in our society that should not be ignored, as well as about everyday heroes that should not be forgotten. It sure brightens my day to hear good news or read interesting information!

Unfortunately, the Media has a somewhat bleak side to its personality that doesn’t make for edifying company. Considering an average day’s headlines, it seems like our nation is obsessed with the trivial, the sensational, and the dramatically traumatic. I see health and happiness articles with temporary cures for a bigger problem. I see articles designed to inflame and deceive at the same time, stories that take the truth and tell a lie. I see blogs and comment pages flooded with the often cruel “votes” of internet users about everything from the latest healthcare bill to a recent celebrity fashion show. I even saw one slightly mocking post,

published on a popular blog recently, about a football player who ate a hot dog during mid-game.

Oh, goodness! How dare he! I wonder, will that incident matter a year, or even a month from now? Probably not. This charming Media seems very bored...perhaps even desperate. Hmm.

When I first met the Media, I thought that we would get along quite well. What's not to like about so much interesting news and information? I didn't know then how toxic this acquaintance was, how given it was to gossip, dishonesty and triviality. After being around it awhile, I felt like my mind was buried beneath a landfill of twisted, useless information. It was very frustrating. Surely America was better than that, could *do* better than that! Naturally, I was very angry at the Media.

However, trying to hold a grudge is like trying to swim against a rip tide. Exhausting and pointless. Knowledge about the Media's character wouldn't help if I didn't do something with it, so I decided to observe for a while. Here's what I realized: Haven't national news sources always been biased and manipulative? Isn't there a dishonest Media in other countries, too, not just in America? Greed, gossip, lying, favoritism—aren't those human characteristics, to be expected from a human nation that has chosen to ignore its Creator?

That has helped me be a bit more practical. I'm not going to waste energy being angry with the Media, although I am going to severely limit the time I spend with it. But, since I still need some knowledge of current events, I'm going to focus on finding truth instead of headlines. I can't make all the yellow journalists out there improve the quality of their work, I can't really prevent the negativity, but I don't have to play their game.

As for America? I'm still patriotic, but with a bit more perspective. I love my country, but she *is* very flawed. I am proud of her past, but she has done things that she should be ashamed

of. I am honored to live in the *Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave*, but these freedoms can't be taken lightly. I think that I owe the Media my thanks. It forced me to think, and I have yet to regret that.